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# Historic Shift: Jews Permitted to Sing and Dance Openly on Temple Mount

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*Right-wing politician MK Itamar Ben Gvir seen after visiting the Temple Mount, at the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City on March 31, 2022. Photo by Yonatan Sindel/Flash90*

**F**or the first time since the Second Temple stood in Jerusalem, Jewish visitors to the Temple Mount were permitted to sing and dance openly across the entire compound, marking a historic shift in enforcement policy under Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir.

The move reverses a long-standing status quo under which Jewish worshipers were regularly detained or removed for quietly praying or even mouthing words, with many later banned from the site for weeks or months. Under new instructions from Ben-Gvir, the Israel Police have been directed to allow open Jewish prayer and singing throughout the holy site.



Ben-Gvir, a frequent visitor to Judaism's holiest site and known advocate for Jewish rights at the Jerusalem location, has fundamentally altered the enforcement approach that has governed the Temple Mount for decades. (https://israel365news.com)

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One activist who regularly ascends the Mount reportedly told Ben-Gvir during the meeting, "You've worked magic since taking office," adding, "This is a historic transformation we never imagined could happen."

The policy change represents more than administrative adjustment—it marks a potential end to the decades-long restriction on Jewish religious expression at Judaism's most sacred site. For the first time since 1967, Jews can openly express their faith through song and dance at the location where their ancestors worshipped for over a millennium.

This development signals a new chapter in the complex history of the Temple Mount, where Jewish sovereignty and religious freedom now align in ways not seen since ancient times. The change reflects broader shifts in Israeli policy toward asserting Jewish rights at holy sites and may indicate further transformations in the management of this most contested religious location.

The recent changes represent a dramatic departure from decades of restrictive policy. Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai has reportedly communicated Ben-Gvir's directive to officers on the ground, instructing them to allow Jewish prayers and songs throughout the compound.

The shift follows a meeting held three weeks ago in Ben-Gvir's office with leaders of Temple Mount advocacy groups. During the meeting, several proposals were raised to ease restrictions and enhance the Jewish presence at the site.

One activist praised the minister's approach, saying, "You've worked magic since you got here." Another described the change as "a historic shift we never thought we'd see."

A central request at that meeting was the freedom to sing aloud, not just in limited areas but across the full extent of the Mount. Ben-Gvir responded directly: "My policy is that it should be permitted to sing across the entire Temple Mount."

According to reports, Israel Police Commissioner Daniel Levy ordered officers not to restrict Jewish singing on any part of the Mount, marking the first time such permissions have been granted across the entire compound.

For Jews, the Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism and is where the First and Second Holy Temples, which were destroyed in ancient times, once stood. As the site for a future temple, David chose Mount Moriah, or the Temple Mount, where it was believed Abraham had built the altar on which to sacrifice his son Isaac. The First Temple was constructed during the reign of David's son, Solomon, and completed in 957 BCE.



Inside the Temple was the Holy of Holies, and here the Foundation Stone is where the Ark of the Covenant was placed, making it the holiest spot in Judaism. After the destruction of the First Temple, the Ark of the Covenant disappeared, its location unknown to this day. (https://israel365news.com)

The Temple Mount represents the spiritual center of Jewish faith and identity. The Temple Mount, known in Hebrew as Har Habayit, is traditionally said to be the site where Abraham demonstrated his devotion to God by taking his son Isaac to be sacrificed. This biblical connection establishes the Mount as the foundational site of Jewish covenant with God.

The First Temple, built by King Solomon, served as the center of Jewish worship and pilgrimage for nearly four centuries until its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The Second Temple, constructed after the return from Babylonian exile, stood for nearly six centuries until its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE, marking the beginning of the Jewish diaspora.


From 1948 until 1967, Jerusalem's Old City was a no-go zone for Israelis and at the outbreak of the Six Day War, Israel had not prepared a plan to retake the area. The dramatic change came during the Six-Day War when Israeli forces captured the Old City of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.

On June 7, 1967, IDF paratroopers advanced through the Old City toward the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, bringing Jerusalem's holiest site under Jewish control for the first time in 2000 years. Rabbi Yisrael Ariel was a young soldier in the paratrooper brigade, led by Gen. Motta Gur, which liberated Jerusalem's Old City. He was one of the first soldiers to reach the Temple Mount.

The moment was captured in historic radio broadcasts that conveyed the emotional significance of Jewish return to their holiest site. The Six-Day War ended with Israel capturing the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Under Jordanian rule, Jews were expelled from Jerusalem and were effectively barred from visiting the Western Wall, despite Article VIII of the 1949 Armistice Agreement which required making arrangements for Israeli Jewish access to the Western Wall. Jewish holy sites were not maintained, and Jewish cemeteries had been desecrated. After the annexation to Israel, each religious group was granted administration over its holy sites. For the first time since 1948, Jews could visit the Old City of Jerusalem and pray at the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews are permitted to pray.

Despite Israel's military victory and sovereignty over the Temple Mount, the site's administration remained complex. The birthfather of this relinquishment, which for years has been called "the status quo on the Temple Mount," was Moshe Dayan, who served as Israeli defense minister during the Six-Day War.

Under this arrangement, while Israel maintained overall security control, the Islamic Waqf continued to administer the religious aspects of the site. For decades, Israeli police enforced strict limitations on Jewish religious expression on the Mount, citing security concerns and maintaining the status quo agreement with the Waqf Islamic trust. 

Jewish visitors faced severe restrictions: prayer was prohibited, even silent prayer could result in detention, and any visible signs of Jewish worship were grounds for removal from the site. Many Jews were banned from the Temple Mount for weeks or months after being caught praying or displaying religious behavior.

The restrictions meant that Jews could visit their holiest site only as tourists, forbidden from engaging in any form of worship or religious expression. This situation persisted for over five decades, creating deep frustration among religious Jews who viewed the limitations as an infringement on their fundamental religious rights.

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